

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, undated, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. Grand Hotel, Jersey. (Aug. 17, 1895) My dear Mrs. Bell:

You will be glad to hear that Alec arrived safe and well and in good spirits. I met him at Havre, or rather he met me at the station as I did not arrive in time to be at the wharf awaiting him.

The children are at present at a small boarding-school out of Paris and as their month will not be up until next week I was glad to accede to an invitation from Alec to go with him to Guernsey where he heard an old Elgin friend of his is living. Old Government House Hotel, St. Peters Port, Guernsey, Aug. 19th. I got as far as the above at St. Helier, Jersey, when I had to stop and now we are at Guernsey. I wonder if you have ever visited the Channel Islands. We are simply enchanted with them, such beautiful trees, brilliantly green grass, such wealth of ivy and such heavy crops of grain I never saw before. We are seeing them under the most favorable aspects, we two together, happy in each other's company after so long a separation and with the most perfect weather imaginable. I don't know if you are aware how much Alec usually objects to brilliant sunshine. It is generally a great drawback to my great delight in the sun that Alec hates it, but here strange to say he finds it more than bearable. Perhaps it is the fresh cool sea breezes that blow from every quarter which reconciles him to it. We don't know but what we have come thus far on a wild goose chase. Alec's friend was here a month ago, but is now in London. His wife and son however are here, and the lady appears to have been a pupil of Alec's in the old Westinghouse Academy days, and Alec had a lovely time this morning talking over 2 old times with her, and I was considerably enlightened regarding the charms of certain young ladies I never heard of before! I am not jealous however. That reminds

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me, a friend of mine said the other day that she liked having her husband make friends among young ladies, she wanted them to be jealous of her that she had such a nice man. What do you think of that? Alec says that you were a little troubled lest he would find us all turned Roman Catholic, so I hasten to assure you that we are all as good Protestants as ever we were. No attempt was ever made to convert us, on the contrary Daisy said one Sunday that she didn't want to go to Church, but dared not stay away, the "Mother" was so shocked that she did not go the Sunday before.

The school the children are in now is Protestant and American and the six other girls are all American and Protestant except a solitary little Irish one who is a Catholic. Alec laughs at the idea that the children will talk French all the time in such company, but I think they do pretty nearly at all events, and I am sure they are getting more regular drill in speaking French correctly than they would in any other way. Their French will not be as idiomatic as if they had remained a year in the Convent, but I think it will be more correct than if they had remained another month there. The children themselves are very happy and even the delights of a journey to Switzerland seemed unable to wholly extinguish their reluctance to leave school.

Alec and I have had a most lovely journey here from Havre. We crossed the bay by boat and thence steamed up the little river Orne to Caen where we staid over night. This is a place to delight an 3 Jersey artist, and I would have been glad to stay there some days and become more familiar with its quaint old houses, beautiful churches and the beautiful country all around. Next morning we came on to Granville and staid there over night as the boat did not leave for Jersey until next morning. There is a beautiful sandy beach at Granville where we saw any number of children and some who were not playing in the wet sand or hunting for shrimps with dresses tucked very high up. There were bathing boxes and shelters all over the beach in front of which people were sitting working, gossiping or dining. It is only in France I think that you can see people living so freely out-of-doors, and I don't object.. Jersey is much larger and I think prettier than Guernsey, but we like St. Peters Port much better than St. Helier. We have driven all around the island, climbed

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its Atlantic headlands and descended into its caverns. From the former come the flowers Alec sends you. The bare wind swept headlands are purple with what Alec says is real Scottish heather, except where the sharp thorned gorse or furze disputes the scanty soil. Alec and I had a little quarrel as to whether I should say the gorse had pricked my legs or stung them. I thought as the victim I ought to know what happened and I was sure I had been stung, my skin burnt and smarted so. It seems as if every farmer had one or more immense greenhouse, I never saw a fifteenth part as many before. All are in good order and repair and look prosperous. Alec has been informed that tomatoes are the staple stock grown in them and that 480,000 pounds of them are shipped to London every day. I am delighted and relieved to find that there are Jersey cows in Jersey and Guernsey cattle in Guernsey. 4 After finding no Newfoundland dogs in Newfoundland I have doubted the existence of the cows in the islands they were named after, but they are here, as large as life and plentiful and they give us such beautiful thick yellow cream for desert. Then the hothouse grapes raised under cover here are marvellous. Alec has just presented me with a bunch that look the first prize at the show here, it is fully a foot high and eight inches wide and each grape is a big mouthful. I wish I could send you some across the ocean.

Good night dear Mrs. Bell, give my love to Mr. Bell and my cousins. Tell Mary I received her letter, but the children had already left Paris, and I did not like to go alone to see Carrie's friend. If I can I will call on our return, but we probably won't stay.

Affectionately, Mabel.